

# Ohana Field Study #2

## - Calendar team summary

Kathy Fraser  
HRD User Research  
September 27, 2005

# Executive Summary


---

- A variety of families were represented by the 8 families in this study. Family dynamics and personalities had a large impact on how the members organized and coordinated their interactions.
- Calendaring in the families was done through a variety of calendars, not only one consolidated calendar.
- Parents often have specific areas that they are more responsible for or "own"
- Communication was important within the families not just as a way of passing information but as a way of supporting relationships
- Families goals and needs are an important aspect of how they choose and want to spend their time
- Individual family members have unique and often complimentary styles


# Study overview

---

- 8 families in Western Washington visited in their homes and interviewed using ethnographic methods to collect information about how they organize the time and activities for their family.
- Both parents (where applicable) were interviewed, as well as most of the children (as age appropriate)
- Mixture of family demographics and situations reflected in families, relatively open recruitment for participants



# Family dynamics



# Themes in family dynamics and needs

---

- Family Calendaring is more than just the paper calendar on the kitchen wall
  - One person (often mother) typically uses that calendar more than others in the family, however the other parent often has their own personal calendar which often has events duplicated.
  - There are areas of specialization, each parent has areas that they “own” (e.g. financial, sports, church)
  - Many families have multiple shared calendars also (for different views or information)
- Non-dominant partner has difficulty being in synch with the main family calendar and events
- Dominant partner often has problems with mobility, accessing the information out of the home

# Role of communication

---

- Families communicate often during the day, in a variety of ways, though most commonly through phone calls
- This contact during the day is not only about sharing of information, or passing of facts, but is about communication with each other, fostering bonds together. This is key to almost all interactions, even when the “purpose” of the interchange is about data passing, the underlying need is to work together as a family unit (parents working together, parents up to date and involved in kids lives)

# Family goals

---


- Family time management is directly related to goals that they have for their families and themselves.
- Families feel the need to balance time for needed activities with family goals (e.g. time together, religion, fostering connection)
- Even organized families wanted to be more organized and feel more in control of their lives
- Parents want to help their kids grow and learn, parenting about time management, school work, chores, etc. Support the increasing independence and responsibilities of teens as they get older.
- Currently are not many tools to help support this need to set and track goals for how time is spent.

# Families are not homogeneous


---

- Families and family members vary in:
  - Amount of organization
  - Level of activity
  - Current use of technology and attitudes towards technology
  - Styles of organization and use
  - Personal style and age of kids seems to impact organizational needs more than work status (e.g. if both parents work or not)
  - Parents often have complimentary styles





## Family calendar activities



# Family calendars

---

- The kitchen wall calendar is not the only or necessarily the most important form of calendaring for the family.
- More than one calendar used within each family. Usually number and types of calendars are based on:
  - person who owns that calendar (personal calendar)
  - users of the calendar if shared
  - type of information in the calendar.
- This prevalent use of multiple calendars reflects needs for flexibility in viewing and organizing information (e.g. keeping work and home separate) and getting information from many sources in different forms). Opportunity for Ohana is in consolidating these disjointed systems.

# Location of calendars and lists

---

- Calendar always in proximity to communication tools such as the phone or computer, and other information (piles of paper) on the counter.
- Many pieces of information in many places based on different type of need or user of each location (e.g. phone numbers by phones).
  - Ohana should support mobility and/or access from many places to support this need.
- Home organization tools synergy with activity areas highlights the need for Ohana to become a “hub” for family itself, so that the family members can be relied on using the system and viewing notes and reminders within the system.

# Information on calendars

---

- Information on calendars varies from time based appointments only, to variety of things such as bills, plans for the day, TV shows to watch, reminders for things to do. Overall, families strike a balance between the use of calendars and lists or other tools to track these activities.
- People tend to fall into patterns with what they do, they know what they need to do based on day of week, time of year esp. for school aged kids during school year. This doesn't mean that they don't need these things reflected in the calendar, sometimes regular appointments are forgotten when planning ahead.
- Not many changes reflected in paper calendars, most likely due to lack of mobility and use of calendar in a non-dynamic way.

# How they write on the calendar

---

- Some people try to enter events on days based on importance or time of day, but can't due to limited space
- Calendar items that are highlighted in different ways include:
  - Holidays / birthdays / anniversaries, annual events
  - Important days or events
  - No difference for events that have more or less preparation needed or for different types of events. These are listed like regular items.
  - Some differences based on people involved (usually color and/or names)
- People often draw lines or shapes and use color to indicate relationships or draw attention to items

# Viewing calendars

---

- Strong desire to see things without needing to actively “do something” to open or start the calendar on the wall
- People tend to reference their calendars often, though this varies. Some look at several times a day, others a few times a week. Often view the calendar and plan days in evenings and mornings.
- Size of time chunk viewed on the calendar varies by person and activity level
  - Some prefer just one day, some several days, some prefer months
  - Difficulty with current systems is lack of flexibility in viewing, breaks in time based on week or month, flipping back and forth.

# Kids

---

- Kids generally just know when things will happen based on day of week or regular patterns
- Don't use family calendar very often, especially when younger. Mostly rely on parents to tell them when things are going to happen.
- Older kids generally are more independent in their planning of time, use a rather non-structured, opportunistic system. Tend to get many reminders from parents and teachers, and to do things very spontaneously with friends.
- Some are forced to use time planning tools given by schools, but kids use these reluctantly if at all.



# Reminders

---

- Reminders of events and tasks to self and others very important and desired (e.g. Outlook reminders one reason given for preferring Outlook over Lotus Notes).
- People create and want reminders for calendar items as well as items on To Do lists.
- Reminders for others and for self are used frequently.
  - Reminders for self usually paper or technology based
  - Reminders for others usually verbal or paper
- Location of notes to others and self relates to importance and urgency, more prominent if more critical, placed near activity hubs for target person
- Audio “notes to self” used occasionally, but not common. Those that do it seem embarrassed by it, use only if needed.



# Mobility

---

- Common pain point, many don't have forms of their calendars that they use while they are out of the home
- Use pieces of paper kept in car and purse just for tracking things when out of house
- Transferring information gotten while outside the home to system inside the home sometimes problematic. Some people have a distinct system for where they keep these transitory notes, while others are less structured about what they do with them.
- Many expressed a desire for a better solution when outside of the home, both parents were interested in a better way to resolve this need

# Paper systems strengths & weaknesses

---

## Strengths:

- Paper calendars are easy to view and use
  - No need to turn on
  - Easy to see from any distance
  - No need to learn
- Flexibility in use and support personal style

## Weaknesses:

- Limited space to enter text in day boxes
- Not mobile or hard to carry
- No backup of information in system
- Hard to share, need duplication between systems
- Lack of support for reminders

# Technology used

---

- Most families used technology to at least degree, though often more deeply by one person than another. One family did most of their calendaring via PDA used by Mom. Others mixed technology and paper.
- Common use of work technology calendars for some personal items as needed (overlapping time, or making use of tools such as reminders).
- Many expressed that they had either tried or wanted to try a PDA, but these hadn't worked out for them due to cost, difficulty in use, and problems with devices.
- Even those resistant to technology have adopted cell phones and use them frequently.

# Personal expression

---

- Importance of personal expression in calendars mixed, some not much, others a great deal.
  - One family made their own calendar, with personal pictures, and liked this
  - Some selected calendars with pictures they like
  - Others reported graphics on calendars as unimportant
- Handwriting very important, as way of allowing for flexibility in information entry, and to allow personal style to be used.
- Most have some form of doodles, lines, shapes drawn on them. Some of this is related to event “flags”, some of this is personal.
  - One mom keeps a list of cute things her kids say



# Further information

---

- Ohana web site:
  - <http://ohana/default.aspx>
- For questions about the research presented here or ongoing research, contact:
  - Kathy Fraser (kfraser)
  - Don Williams (donwil)



# Personal expression

---

- Importance of personal expression in calendars mixed, some not much, others a great deal.
  - One family made their own calendar, with personal pictures, and liked this
  - Some selected calendars with pictures they like
  - Others reported graphics on calendars as unimportant
- Handwriting very important, as way of allowing for flexibility in information entry, and to allow personal style to be used.
- Most have some form of doodles, lines, shapes drawn on them. Some of this is related to event “flags”, some of this is personal.
  - One mom keeps a list of cute things her kids say



# Further information

---

- Ohana web site:
  - <http://ohana/default.aspx>
- For questions about the research presented here or ongoing research, contact:
  - Kathy Fraser (kfraser)
  - Don Williams (donwil)

